

SSCES Chairman's Report 2021

I hope you have all managed to avoid the corona virus and keep well. Though I expect it has taken its toll, as with most people, either with the loss or illness of family and friends, or coping with the isolation of lockdowns, especially those who are single.

We have subscribed to Zoom Video Conferencing so we will not have a repeat of last year's AGM, when we were cut off after 40 minutes (which was the first time we had experienced that). Regarding Zoom, we have held all our board meetings through the year using it which has enabled us to eliminate hall hire charges.

Change Registered Office Address and Landline

Just to clarify the situation, we have changed our registered address and landline because our Company Secretary John Clark moved to a new house.

Effects of C19 and Lockdowns

As a result of lockdowns, school closures or their reduced working hours, onsite power consumption has been reduced at all the premises which has reduced our expected income.

Our contractors, Solarsense, also closed for some of the time during lockdown, had staff furloughed and working reduced hours. This has resulted in repeated delays through the year to get faults dealt with on inverters and other remedial work carried out.

However, on a good note, Jude, our accountant managed to obtain the £10 k Government Covid Grant , which has helped make up for the loss of income, as you will see in our accounts.

Challenges

We have had various problems occur with inverters which have on occasions been corrected quickly, but other times have taken some time to be resolved.

Westfield Upper School, Yeovil – 3-Storey Building

A fault occurred which required the Solarsense engineer to disconnect one string out of 6 on our array on the 3-storey building to enable the rest to function. We have been told that access to the roof would be required to fix this, but to enable this we were given a quote of £6,100 for scaffolding. We have decided that it is not economic to do this, so at least for now, we have decided not to do anything as the rest of the array is apparently working at 80% of normal efficiency.

Holyrood Academy, Chard

Solarsense advised us that there was water ingress in our installations on 3 of the flat roofs at the school and to cure this problem they have recently replaced the cables and connectors. In the process of doing this, they have brought to our attention the fact that there is significant debris and some vegetation blocking the roof drains leading to the base of our panels being immersed in water when there is significant rain.

We have taken this issue up with the new school caretaker who is being helpful but is waiting for some equipment to be returned that has been lent to another linked school. We are intending to have those panels cleaned at the same time.

Westfield Lower School, Yeovil

We have similar problems with water ingress to our installations on the flat roofs at the Lower School. These are scheduled to have the cables and connectors replaced on 3rd/4th June. We can assume that the roof drains there also need clearing as we have been informed there has been flooding on the roofs affecting our installations. I will be taking this up with the school caretaker and should be able to provide an update on the situation at the AGM.

Potential Projects

George Reynolds Centre, Crewkerne

As I reported last year, we were waiting to hear back from Crewkerne Town Council about the proposal that Chris Adcock made on our behalf. We never heard back, so we do not know what they may have done (if anything).

Other small projects have been considered throughout the year but have not been viable.

South Petherton Community Hospital

The hospital is only about 12 years old and could be an ideal project. I sought advice from Dorset Community Energy who have recently installed P.V. on 3 Dorset hospitals. They however managed to obtain 40% grant through Dorset County Council, while we have not been able to obtain any funding from Somerset CC or from South Somerset District Council. Also, the Secretary of Dorset CE told me that there was an issue requiring an extra £5,000 - £15,000 at each hospital having to be spent on electrics to prevent the P.V. interfering with the emergency generators cutting in when necessary. Consequently, I have shelved the idea.

Somerset Community Energy

We have not had any meetings through the year, largely because of lockdowns and the individual CE groups having their own concerns. As I said, there has not been any funding available from SCC or SSDC and they are both now preoccupied with the reform of the District Councils to achieve financial efficiencies. SSDC and Mendip DC may merge to form East Somerset Council and West Somerset and Taunton Deane merged with Sedgemoor DC to form West Somerset Council, or all the DC's being merged into one unitary council.

Meter Reading

We failed to get anyone at Westfield Academy to read our meters for us as we had hoped, but our member Peter Chapman who lives close to the Academy has kindly taken on doing this for us. We are most grateful. The other premises have continued to help us and do the meter readings, as arranged by Melissa last year.

New Director

David Rabone, one of our founder directors had said he would need to retire due to ill health but has managed to carry on for now. As a result of this, I introduced Edward Collins, a local member to the board at a recent board meeting. By the end of the meeting, we co-opted him onto the board. He will therefore need to stand for election at the AGM.

Conclusion

Though our income has been reduced by the lockdowns, we have still achieved significant savings for the three Academies and the Abbey Manor Community Hall. The long dry summer last year resulted in a record FIT income which offset the loss of income from the reduced use of the premises. Despite historically low inflation rates, the board have decided to recommend 4.5% interest to shareholders and consider this prudent in the circumstances.

Finally, I would like to thank Melissa, our administrator for all her work throughout the year, Judith for doing our accounts and to Peter Chapman for taking on the meter reading for us at Westfield Academy and rebooting one of the inverters recently.

Like last year, to save time, I do not intend to read my report at the AGM. I will give any necessary updates and address any questions. If you have any questions, I would appreciate receiving them in advance so I can prepare answers. Please email any questions to admin@sscom.energy. I will still try to answer any spontaneous questions at the AGM, but some may require follow-up answers after the meeting.

John Christmas
Chairman